

Protect Your Hearing at Work

This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Noise-induced hearing loss is one of the most common work-related illnesses. Each year, about twenty-two million U.S. workers may be exposed to noise loud enough to be harmful. CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, or NIOSH, wants you to know how to protect yourself from work-related noise-induced hearing loss.

Noise levels above 85 decibels during an eight hour work day may put you at risk. It might be too loud in your workplace if you have to raise your voice to speak to someone an arm's length away. The risk isn't the same for all workers. Ringing or roaring in your ears is a clue that noise may be damaging your ears. Also, if your ears feel stuffy or full, it can be a sign that you have harmed them.

So what can you do? If you work in an area with high noise levels, there are three main ways to reduce your risk.

1. Know your noise exposure. Ask your employer if a noise survey has been done. If you have access to a smartphone, you can use a noise meter app to get an idea of the noise levels in your area. There's a guide for selecting an app on the NIOSH website.
2. Reduce noise levels at their source. Think about ways your workplace or equipment could be made quieter; noise controls don't have to be complicated or expensive. Go to our website and check out the NIOSH *Buy Quiet* campaign which encourages companies to purchase quieter tools and equipment.
3. Until noise levels are reduced, wear hearing protection. It works when you find a protector you like and you wear it consistently and correctly. NIOSH has a searchable database to help you find the best hearing protector for your job.

For more information about hearing protection at work, including free tools, please go to cdc.gov and enter *NIOSH Noise* in the search box.

For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.